

## **AMENDMENTS**

Please amend the specification as follows:

Please add the following paragraph after Paragraph 43 in the specification:

The pH of the clay slurry can be adjusted to a desired level. In some embodiments, the pH is adjusted to above 5.5. In other embodiments, the pH is adjusted to between 6 and 11. Preferably, the pH is adjusted by adding HCl, H<sub>3</sub>PO<sub>4</sub>, H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>, or CH<sub>3</sub>COOH.